

Society in the 1960s vs 2010

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America has changed significantly in the last 50 years. Attitudes have swayed and technology has become more advanced. New improvements have made our everyday lives easier, but does this mean our lives have gotten better? Based on careful analysis and compelling statistics gathered by leading educators, one may in fact, deem the 1960's to be a superior time period in which to live. Factors such as economy, employment opportunity, earning potential, household stability, health and overall outlook on life reveal the once great qualities lost since the "Sixties", the better time to live.

Economy affects almost everyone in America. For most people, it is the determining factor in how well we live. Unemployment is one of the many vices in the United States and ultimately is used to represent the health of the economy. Unemployment rates fluctuate through the years and a rising percentage of people unable to find work is devastating on the country as a whole. In 1960, about 5.5% of able individuals were unemployed. Unfortunately, this number has increased, resulting in a 9.6% overall unemployment rate(infoplease.com n.p.). This means that almost 1 out of 10 Americans who are able to work are jobless for a couple of reasons. The first is that there is much more competition overseas. Large companies have taken their manufacturing business to foreign countries in order to cut costs. Second, the advances in machinery and robotics has given rise to the un-manned workplace. With more people being replaced with machines, the unemployment rate increases. Back in 1960, jobs now done by machines were held by hard-working Americans in an attempt to live

the American Dream. With more individuals working in the 1960s, the economy was better, the American people were living better lives, and America in general was more stable than it was in 2010.

Along with the fact that a higher number of individuals were working, they were also earning more money. Danny Vinik, a writer for Business Insider explained the dilemma in an article from 2013, "In 1960, the nominal minimum wage was \$1.00, but that is equal to nearly \$8.00 in today's dollars. In fact, the real minimum wage peaked in 1968 at \$10.74 an hour (2013 dollars). Since then, the purchasing power of the minimum wage has slowly fallen over time"(Vinik n.p.). In other words, the amount of money earned by minimum wage workers is too low in order for them to live. To understand this, one must first be familiar with what the minimum wage actually is. The idea of a minimum wage was enacted into United States law in 1938 with the Fair Labor Standards Act. The purpose was to ensure that an individual making minimum wage could support a minimum standard of living. Many Americans rely on the minimum wage to get by. However, with the amount of minimum wage decreasing, Americans are now being forced down under the poverty line, whereas in the 1960s, it was easier to live off of minimum wage. With a higher minimum wage, people have more spending power to boost the economy, and ultimately live life independently, without the need of social welfare programs. The 1960s were a better time of opportunity, even for those not making a high income.

Many who earn these wages, high or low, are most likely providing for their family. The normal family household, however, has changed dramatically. The absence of a parent figure has become more common in our world today. In 1960, only 10% of children lived with one parent, but by 2010 that number has jumped to almost 32%. Reasons such as divorce, death of a parent, and a parent leaving the family have resulted in a significant increase of single-parent households. Gretchem Livingston, a contributor to PewResearchCenter.com states that "There has been a marked increase in the share of nonmarital births. And even though divorce rates have leveled off in recent decades, they remain higher than they were in the 1960s and 1970s"(PewResearchCenter n.p.). Divorce is the leading cause in these single parent families and it has devastating effects on the individuals in it. According to the *Encyclopedia of Childrens' Health*, children that are raised in a single parent household are twice as likely to drop out of school, more likely to join a gang, abuse drugs, and commit violent crimes. Children in a single parent household are also twice as likely to get divorced themselves. It is clear that the 1960s was a much more stable time for both parents and their children.

We have indeed come a long way in the topic of medicine since the 1960s. Throughout the years, scientists have had breakthroughs in the medical industry, creating special medicine that has helped save millions of lives. Along with preserving life, they have also extended the average life expectancy. In 1960, the average life

expectancy of a newborn was 66-70 years. However, in 2010 life expectancy was recorded at about 76-79 years (The hike is only logically caused by new medicine used today that was not fully developed in 1960).

Even as medicine gets stronger, however, factors in health quality have continued to worsen, such as the American Obesity rate. "Across the US Population, overweight and obesity trends have increased significantly over time from 1960 to 2010. Since 1960, overweight and obesity, combined, has increased by 23.7%, from 44.8% in 1960-62 to 68.5% in 2007-10" (obesityHQ.com n.p.). Obesity has been connected with symptoms such as heart disease, diabetes, and even strokes. Back in the 1960s, less people suffered from obesity and, as a result, lived better, healthier, happier lives.

Death of a loved one is very hard for people to experience, but it is even worse when that loved one takes their own life. Suicide is not a new dilemma, but it has become more common in today's society. in the year 1960, there was 4.5 suicides in young adults age 15-24 per 100,000 resident population however, in the same group of young adults in 2010, this number was more than double, resulting in about 10.5 suicides per 100,000 resident population (death rates for suicide n.p.). Untreated Depression is the number one cause of suicides, and depression can be an effect of anything from mental illness, emotional pain, or even bullying. bullying has taken a new form since the 1960s. With the rise of computers and social media, a new trend, called cyber bullying has left victims feeling verbally abused over the internet. in 1960, such

mediums of communication did not exist, so cyberbullying and bullying as a whole was not as much of a threat to teens and young adults as it is now. Not only does a suicide affect the loved ones of the victim but it also can have a devastating blow on the economy as well. Millions of dollars are lost due to suicides, whether it is in medical costs or the loss of productivity within the victim's place of work. Lower suicide rates in 1960 indicate a more positive outlook on life and a far lower frequency of bullying incidents, along with a more productive economy across the US.

It is true to say that some things never change. But since the 1960s, people have been living less healthy lives, our economy has worsened, and society has been struggling to deal with issues in family matters and individuals. As certain advances have distracted us from the big picture of life, we are unaware of the values the past had to offer. As we can see from the compelling facts, we can strive to make the vices of today a thing of the future's past.

Works Cited

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